

The Death of Ivan Ilyich
and
The Devil

The Death of Ivan Ilyich
and
The Devil

Leo Tolstoy

Translated by Hugh Aplin



ALMA CLASSICS

ALMA CLASSICS
an imprint of

ALMA BOOKS LTD
3 Castle Yard
Richmond
Surrey TW10 6TF
United Kingdom
www.almaclassics.com

The Death of Ivan Ilyich first published in Russian as *Smert' Ivana Ilyicha* in 1886

The Devil first published in Russian as *D'iavol* in 1911

This translation first published by Hesperus Press Ltd in 2005

This revised translation first published by Alma Classics Ltd (previously
Oneworld Classics Ltd) in 2011

This new edition first published by Alma Classics in 2013. Repr. 2016.

Translation and notes © Hugh Aplin, 2005, 2011

Background material © Alma Classics Ltd

Cover image © Getty Images

Printed in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

ISBN: 978-1-84749-363-7

All the pictures in this volume are reprinted with permission or presumed to be in the public domain. Every effort has been made to ascertain and acknowledge their copyright status, but should there have been any unwitting oversight on our part, we would be happy to rectify the error in subsequent printings.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the publisher. This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be resold, lent, hired out or otherwise circulated without the express prior consent of the publisher.

Contents

Introduction	xi
The Death of Ivan Ilyich	1
The Devil	71
<i>Notes</i>	129
Extra Material	131
<i>Leo Tolstoy's Life</i>	133
<i>Leo Tolstoy's Works</i>	148
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	161
Appendix	163

The Death of Ivan Ilyich

IN THE LARGE BUILDING of the Courts of Law during a break in the hearing of the Melvinskys' case the members of the court and the Public Prosecutor gathered in Ivan Yegorovich Shebek's office and the conversation turned to the famous Krasovsky case. Fyodor Vasilyevich grew heated in arguing its inadmissibility for trial, Ivan Yegorovich stood his ground, while Pyotr Ivanovich, who had not entered into the argument to begin with, took no part in it and was looking through the local *Gazette* which had just been delivered.

"Gentlemen!" he said, "Ivan Ilyich has died."

"Really?"

"Here, read it," he said to Fyodor Vasilyevich, and handed him the fresh issue, still smelling of the press.

Inside a black border it said: "It is with deep regret that Praskovya Fyodorovna Golovina informs relatives and friends of the passing of her beloved spouse, Member of the Chamber of Justice Ivan Ilyich Golovin, which occurred on the fourth of February of this year of 1882. The funeral is on Friday at 1 p.m."

Ivan Ilyich had been a colleague of the assembled gentlemen and everyone had liked him. He had been ill for several weeks; his illness had been said to be incurable. His post had been kept open for him, but there had been speculation that in the event of his death Alexeyev might be appointed to his post, and to Alexeyev's post either Vinnikov or Shtabel. So on hearing of Ivan Ilyich's death, the first thought of each of the gentlemen assembled in the office was about what significance this death might have for the transfer or promotion of the members of the court themselves or their acquaintances.

"I'll probably get Shtabel's or Vinnikov's job now," thought Fyodor Vasilyevich. "It's been promised me for a long time,

and the promotion will mean a pay increase of eight hundred roubles for me, plus office expenses.”

“I’ll have to request a transfer from Kaluga for my brother-in-law now,” thought Pyotr Ivanovich. “The wife will be delighted. And now she won’t be able to say I’ve never done anything for her relatives.”

“I didn’t think he’d ever get back on his feet,” said Pyotr Ivanovich out loud. “It’s a shame.”

“And what exactly was it he had?”

“The doctors couldn’t make a diagnosis. That is, they made diagnoses, but differing ones. When I saw him last, I thought he’d get better.”

“Well I never did go round to see him, not after the holidays. I kept meaning to.”

“And was he well off?”

“I think his wife has a very little. Something quite insignificant though.”

“Yes, we’ll have to go. They lived a terribly long way away.”

“A long way from you, that is. Everything’s a long way from you.”

“He just can’t forgive me for living over the river,” said Pyotr Ivanovich, smiling at Shebek. And they began talking about the great distances involved in the town, and went off to the hearing.

Apart from the speculation this death prompted in each of them about transfers and the possible changes at work which might ensue from the death, the very fact of the death of a close acquaintance prompted in all who had learnt of it a feeling, as always, of joy that it was he who had died, not I.

“What about that, he’s dead; but I’m not,” each of them thought or felt. And the close acquaintances, the so-called friends of Ivan Ilyich, at the same time involuntarily also thought about how they would now have to fulfil the very dull obligations of propriety and go to a requiem and pay the widow a visit of condolence.

Closest of all were Fyodor Vasilyevich and Pyotr Ivanovich.

Pyotr Ivanovich had been a fellow student at the law school and considered himself indebted to Ivan Ilyich.

After giving his wife the news of the death of Ivan Ilyich and his ideas about the possible transfer of his brother-in-law to their district over lunch, Pyotr Ivanovich, without having a lie-down, put on his tailcoat and went to Ivan Ilyich's.

By the entrance to Ivan Ilyich's apartment stood a carriage and two cabs. Downstairs in the entrance hall, leaning against the wall by the coat stand was a coffin lid covered with silk brocade, with tassels and gold braid cleaned with powder. Two ladies in black were taking off their fur coats. One, Ivan Ilyich's sister, was familiar, the other was an unfamiliar lady. A colleague of Pyotr Ivanovich's, Shvarts, was coming downstairs and, catching sight from the top step of the man coming in, he stopped and gave him a wink, as if to say: "Ivan Ilyich made a mess of his arrangements; not like you and me."

Shvarts's face with its English sideburns and the whole of his thin figure in a tailcoat had, as always, an elegant solemnity, and this solemnity, which always contradicted the character of Shvarts's playfulness, had a particular piquancy here. So thought Pyotr Ivanovich.

Pyotr Ivanovich let the ladies go on ahead of him and set off slowly up the stairs behind them. Shvarts did not descend, but stopped at the top. Pyotr Ivanovich realized why: he evidently wanted to arrange where they would be having a game of *vint** that day. The ladies went up the stairs to the widow's rooms, but Shvarts, with lips firm and compressed in a serious way, directed Pyotr Ivanovich with a playful glance and a movement of his eyebrows to the right, into the dead man's room.

As is always the way, Pyotr Ivanovich went in uncertain about what he would have to do there. One thing he knew, that crossing yourself in these instances never does any harm. As to whether there was any need to bow as well while doing so he was not entirely sure, and for that reason he chose a middle

course: upon entering the room he began crossing himself and kind of bowing a little. So far as the movements of his arms and head permitted him, he at the same time surveyed the room. Two youngsters, one a schoolboy, seemingly nephews, were leaving the room, crossing themselves. An old woman stood motionless. And a lady with strangely raised eyebrows was saying something to her in a whisper. A sacristan in a frock coat, brisk and decisive, was reading something in a loud voice with an expression that ruled out any contradiction; the peasant who waited at table, Gerasim, walked by in front of Pyotr Ivanovich with a light step and sprinkled something on the floor. Immediately upon seeing this, Pyotr Ivanovich sensed the faint smell of the decomposing corpse. On his last visit to Ivan Ilyich, Pyotr Ivanovich had seen this peasant in the study; he had carried out the duties of a sick-nurse, and Ivan Ilyich had been particularly fond of him. Pyotr Ivanovich kept on crossing himself and bowing slightly towards a point midway between the coffin, the sacristan and the icons on the table in the corner. Then, when this crossing motion with his hand seemed to him already too protracted, he paused and began examining the dead man.

The dead man lay, as dead men always do, particularly heavily, sinking his cold limbs into the lining of the coffin in the manner of a dead man, with his now for ever bowed head on a pillow, and, as dead men always do, he was thrusting out his yellow waxen forehead with the bald patches above the sunken temples and his jutting nose, which seemed to be pressed down onto the upper lip. He had changed greatly, had grown still thinner since Pyotr Ivanovich had last seen him, but, as with all dead men, his face was more handsome and, most importantly, more significant than it had been on the living man. On his face was the expression of the fact that what had needed to be done had been done, and done correctly. Besides that, in this expression there was also a reproach or a reminder to the living. This reminder seemed to Pyotr Ivanovich inappropriate, or at least

of no relevance to him. He began to have an unpleasant sort of feeling, and for that reason Pyotr Ivanovich hurriedly crossed himself once more and, too hurriedly as it seemed to him, not in accordance with the proprieties, he turned and went towards the door. Shvarts was waiting for him in the connecting room with his legs set wide apart and with both hands playing with his top hat behind his back. One glance at Shvarts's playful, hygienic and elegant figure refreshed Pyotr Ivanovich. Pyotr Ivanovich understood that he, Shvarts, stood above all this and was not yielding to dispiriting impressions. His appearance alone said: the incident of Ivan Ilyich's requiem can in no way serve as sufficient grounds for considering the agenda disrupted, that is to say, nothing can prevent this very evening the snapping, during its unsealing, of a pack of cards, at the same time as a manservant is setting out four fresh candles; there is no basis at all for assuming that this incident might prevent us from spending even this evening pleasantly. And he actually said so in a whisper to Pyotr Ivanovich as he passed, proposing meeting for a game at Fyodor Vasilyevich's. But Pyotr Ivanovich was clearly not destined to have a game of *vint* that evening. Praskovya Fyodorovna, a short, fat woman who, despite all her efforts to arrange things to the contrary, nonetheless grew broader from the shoulders down, all in black, with lace covering her head and with the same strangely raised eyebrows as the lady standing opposite the coffin had had, emerged from her rooms with the other ladies and, seeing them into the dead man's door, said:

“The requiem will be in a moment; go through.”

Shvarts bowed indeterminately and stopped, evidently neither accepting nor declining this proposal. Praskovya Fyodorovna, recognizing Pyotr Ivanovich, sighed, went right up close to him, took him by the hand and said:

“I know you were a true friend of Ivan Ilyich's...” and looked at him, awaiting from him actions in keeping with these words.

Pyotr Ivanovich knew that, just as he had had to cross himself there, so here he had to squeeze her hand, sigh and say:

“Believe me!” And that was what he did. And having done so, he felt that the desired result had been achieved: that he was touched and so was she.

“Come with me, before it begins in there; I need to have a talk with you,” said the widow. “Give me your arm.”

Pyotr Ivanovich gave her his arm and they set off in the direction of the inner rooms, past Shvarts, who gave Pyotr Ivanovich a mournful wink. “There goes your *shint!* Please don’t be hard on us if we find another partner. We could make it a fivesome when you get away,” said his playful look.

Pyotr Ivanovich heaved a sigh even more deep and mournful, and Praskovya Fyodorovna squeezed his arm gratefully. On entering her sitting room, decorated in pink cretonne and with its dim lamp, they sat down by the table: she on a sofa, and Pyotr Ivanovich on a low pouf with damaged springs which sank awkwardly under his weight. Praskovya Fyodorovna wanted to warn him to sit on another chair, but she thought this warning out of keeping with her situation and changed her mind. Sitting down on this pouf, Pyotr Ivanovich remembered Ivan Ilyich decorating this sitting room and asking his advice about this very pink cretonne with its green leaves. Sitting down on the sofa and passing by the table (the entire sitting room was absolutely full of knick-knacks and furniture), the widow had caught the black lace of her black mantilla on the table’s decorative carving. Pyotr Ivanovich half-rose to unhook it, and the liberated pouf began undulating beneath him and nudging him. The widow began unhooking her lace for herself and Pyotr Ivanovich sat down again, suppressing the rebelling pouf beneath him. But the widow failed to unhook it completely, and Pyotr Ivanovich rose again, and again the pouf started to rebel, and even made a cracking noise. When all this was finished, she took out a clean cambric handkerchief and began to cry. But Pyotr Ivanovich had been cooled by the episode with the lace and the battle with the pouf and he sat there scowling. This awkward situation was interrupted

by Sokolov, Ivan Ilyich's butler, reporting that the plot at the cemetery, the one that Praskovya Fyodorovna had designated, would cost two hundred roubles. She stopped crying and, glancing at Pyotr Ivanovich with the look of a victim, said in French that things were very hard for her. Pyotr Ivanovich made a silent gesture that expressed indubitable certainty that it could not be otherwise.

"Please, do smoke," she said in a magnanimous and at the same time wretched voice, and took up the question of the price of the plot with Sokolov. As he lit a cigarette, Pyotr Ivanovich heard her enquire most thoroughly about the various prices of land and determine the one that should be bought. In addition, after finishing with the plot, she gave instructions about the choristers too. Sokolov left.

"I'm doing everything myself," she said to Pyotr Ivanovich, moving to one side the albums that lay on the table, and noticing that ash was threatening the table, she promptly moved an ashtray towards Pyotr Ivanovich and pronounced: "I think it an affectation to declare that I can't deal with practical matters because of my grief. On the contrary, if anything can... not comfort, but distract me, then it's doing things for him." She took out the handkerchief again as if meaning to cry, then suddenly, as if regaining control of herself, she shook herself out of it and began to speak calmly:

"Anyway, there's a matter I want to discuss with you."

Pyotr Ivanovich bowed, not allowing the springs of the pouf to uncoil as they immediately started stirring beneath him.

"He suffered dreadfully in the final days."

"He suffered a lot?" asked Pyotr Ivanovich.

"Oh, dreadfully! Not for the final minutes, but hours, he was screaming continually. For three days in a row he screamed without a break. It was unbearable. I can't understand how I bore it; it could be heard three rooms away. Oh, the things I've had to bear!"

"But surely he wasn't conscious?" asked Pyotr Ivanovich.

“He was,” she whispered, “until the last moment. He said goodbye to us a quarter of an hour before he died and asked that Volodya be taken away as well.”

The thought of the suffering of a man he had known so well, first as a cheerful lad, as a schoolboy, then as an adult partner, irrespective of the unpleasant consciousness of his own pretence and that of this woman, suddenly horrified Pyotr Ivanovich. Once again he saw that forehead, the nose pressing down on the lip, and he became afraid for himself.

“Three days of dreadful suffering and death. And it might begin right now, at any minute, for me too,” he thought, and for a moment he became afraid. But immediately, how he did not know himself, the usual thought came to his aid that it had happened to Ivan Ilyich, and not to him, and that it should not and could not happen to him; that in thinking that way he was succumbing to a gloomy mood, something he ought not to do, as was evident from Shvarts’s face. And having finished this line of reasoning, Pyotr Ivanovich relaxed and began enquiring with interest about the details of Ivan Ilyich’s passing, as though death were a venture of a sort characteristic only of Ivan Ilyich, but not at all characteristic of him.

After various passages of conversation about the details of the truly dreadful physical suffering endured by Ivan Ilyich (Pyotr Ivanovich learnt of these details only according to the extent that Ivan Ilyich’s torment had got on Praskovya Fyodorovna’s nerves), the widow evidently thought it necessary to get down to business.

“Oh, Pyotr Ivanovich, how hard it is, how dreadfully hard, how dreadfully hard.” And she again began to cry.

Pyotr Ivanovich sighed and waited for her to blow her nose. When she had blown her nose he said:

“Believe me...” and again she began to talk freely, and came out with what was evidently the main matter she had wanted to discuss with him; that matter consisted of questions about how, on the occasion of her husband’s death, she might get

some money from the public purse. She pretended she was asking Pyotr Ivanovich's advice about a pension, but he could see that she already knew down to the tiniest details even things that he did not know – everything that could be extracted from the public purse on the occasion of this death – but what she wanted to find out was whether it was not possible somehow to extract even more money. Pyotr Ivanovich tried to think up such a way, but having given it some thought and having, for the sake of decency, berated our government for its stinginess, he said that it did not seem possible to get any more. At that point she sighed and evidently began thinking of a way to get rid of her visitor. He realized this, stubbed out his cigarette, rose, squeezed her hand and set off for the entrance hall.

In the dining room with the clock that Ivan Ilyich had been so pleased to have bought in an antique shop Pyotr Ivanovich met the priest and several more acquaintances who had come for the requiem, and he saw a pretty young lady he knew, Ivan Ilyich's daughter. She was all in black. Her waist, very slim, seemed even slimmer. She had a gloomy, resolute, almost angry look. She bowed to Pyotr Ivanovich as if he were to blame for something. Behind the daughter, with the same offended look, stood a rich young man Pyotr Ivanovich knew, an examining magistrate, her fiancé, so he had heard. He bowed to them dolefully and meant to go through into the dead man's room, when from under the stairs there appeared the small figure of the schoolboy son, dreadfully like Ivan Ilyich. This was the little Ivan Ilyich as Pyotr Ivanovich remembered him at the law school. His eyes were both tear-stained and like those that impure boys of thirteen or fourteen sometimes have. On seeing Pyotr Ivanovich, the boy began knitting his brow sternly and shamefacedly. Pyotr Ivanovich nodded his head to him and went into the dead man's room. The requiem started – candles, groans, incense, tears, sobbing. Pyotr Ivanovich stood frowning, gazing at his feet in front of him. Not once did he glance at the dead man, and to the end he refused to succumb

to relaxing influences, and was one of the first to leave. There was nobody in the entrance hall. Gerasim, the peasant who waited at table, darted out of the deceased's room, rummaged with his strong arms through all the fur coats to find Pyotr Ivanovich's and held it up for him.

"Well, Gerasim, old fellow?" said Pyotr Ivanovich, just so as to say something. "Isn't it a shame?"

"It's God's will. It'll be the same for all of us," said Gerasim, baring his white, unbroken, peasant's teeth, and, like a man in the swing of intensive work, he vigorously opened the door, called a driver, helped Pyotr Ivanovich into the cab and jumped back towards the porch as if trying to think up something else he could do.

Pyotr Ivanovich found it particularly pleasant to get a breath of pure air after the smell of incense, the corpse and carbolic acid.

"Where to?" asked the driver.

"It's not too late. I can still call in on Fyodor Vasilyevich."

And Pyotr Ivanovich drove off. And indeed, he came upon them playing the end of the first rubber, so it was convenient for him to join in as a fifth player.

2

THE PAST HISTORY of Ivan Ilyich's life was the most simple and ordinary and the most dreadful.

Ivan Ilyich died at the age of forty-five as a member of the Chamber of Justice. He was the son of a civil servant who had made the sort of career in various ministries and departments in St Petersburg that gets people to a position in which, even though it proves clear they are unfit to do any real job, they nonetheless, due to their lengthy past service and their rank, cannot be dismissed, and so are given fabricated, fictitious